

## **Roger Brooke Taney to Andrew Jackson, September 4, 1840, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.**

class=MsoNormal>CHIEF JUSTICE TANEY TO JACKSON.

Baltimore, September 4, 1840.

Private.

My dear sir, I received your kind letter of April last in due course of mail, and when it came to hand I still had hopes that I might be able to visit you this summer. But a few days after I received it, Mrs. Taney unfortunately fell through a trap door in a store, and broke her thigh. She has suffered a great deal from the wound, and the splints were not taken off until about a fortnight ago. She is now able with the aid of crutches to move about a little in the chambers, but she cannot yet bear much weight upon the limb, and probably will not be able to get down stairs for a month to come. When this unhappy accident happened it put an end to all hope of visiting the Hermitage this summer; and I have been constantly at home since I last wrote to you, with the exception of a few days that I was holding court in Delaware.

I perceive by the news-papers that Mr. Clay has been making a speech at Nashville, and in his usual style. He would have shown a better temper and a better taste too, if he had stayed away. Nor do I understand how he can hope to impeach your conduct in the two appointments he mentioned without implicating himself still more deeply. Your remarks upon his speech are certainly not answered in his letter. As the matter now stands before the public it appears that while you made these nominations, believing the appointments to be proper ones, Mr. Clay agreed to confirm them, although he believed them to be

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improper and injurious to the public interests. I write under the impression that he did not vote against either nomination, as he intimated nothing of the kind in his letter.

The attack on the memory of Livingston was harsh and cruel. A kinder or more amiable man never lived. The charge as stated in Mr. Clay's letter is unjust, for it leaves the reader under the impression that Livingston used the public money for his own private purposes. Now as I have always understood the transaction, he never used a dollar of it for himself, or for his own private emolument; but was the victim of his kind feelings towards another person who abused his confidence. Undoubtedly he ought not to have loaned the public money to any one, under any circumstances, but the fault was committed in a moment of weakness, and he atoned for it by a long life of severest labour, which he underwent for the purpose of replacing the money; and the debt was unquestionably settled and the public satisfied before you nominated him as secretary of State. When such attacks are made our friends at Washington who have all the documents within their reach ought to publish an account of Livingston's default; and also the names of those who nominated Swartout on his first and second appointment.

I do not know when Mr. Kendall proposes to publish the history of your life. He will withhold it I hope, until the present excitements have in some degree subsided, for if it is put forth at this time, it may perhaps, hereafter, as well as now be treated as a party publication, intended for present party purposes, and to operate on present questions. The work is for posterity rather than for the present generation, and it should not I think appear, until a calmer season when the public mind is prepared to listen to the voice of truth. It cannot be long before the nobler and better feelings of the American people resume their legitimate sway—and when that is the case, the great body of them of all parties will be ready to acknowledge how well you have deserved the gratitude of your country, for your civil as well as your military services.

The election I find is every day waging warmer and warmer. The friends of the administration in this place appear to be in good spirits, and have strong hopes of

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carrying this state for Mr. Van Buren. It is however always a doubtful and close struggle in Maryland. I wish our Washington friends had felt more strongly the necessity of constant exertion on the part of the government to restore the circulation of gold and silver and to counteract the efforts of those who are striving to prolong the present state of the currency. I understand that the salaried officers at the seat of government have been permitted to sell the specie drafts given in payment 0097 73 of their salaries for depreciated paper. In this way the government itself through its own officers is throwing a depreciated currency upon the community in return for the specie it collects for taxes; and also furnishes specie in larger masses to those who are purchasing it to export to foreign nations, and who perhaps would hardly be able to obtain it in such heavy amounts from any other source. If the officers and clerks who receive their salaries in specie drafts were not permitted to sell them, the specie would be paid out in small sums to the people, and the amount thus put in circulation would have gone far to restore confidence not only in the District of Columbia, but in the surrounding country; and by furnishing a sufficient metallic currency for small payments, it would have contributed largely towards driving out of circulation the miserable and fraudulent shinplasters with which the country is overrun. The advocates of paper are incessantly on the watch struggling against the introduction of specie, and especially of gold; and unless the officers of government are equally vigilant and equally in earnest the paper party will triumph.

I observed by the news-papers that you visited one of the watering places in your state this summer. You found benefit I hope from your trip, and I trust that your health is better than it was, when you last wrote to me. Mrs. Taney and my children all unite in best wishes and affectionate remembrance to you and your family in which I most cordially join them, and  
Am Dear sir most truly your friend